

channels of the set of channels than the second set of subwindows, wherein each subwindow of the first and second set of subwindows comprises a plurality of channels from the set of channels;

a plurality of fine wavelength division multiplexers configured to support uni-directional traffic comprising the first set of subwindows;

a plurality of fine wavelength division demultiplexers configured to support uni-directional traffic comprising the second set of subwindows;

a first plurality of optical line amplifiers, each of the first plurality of optical line amplifiers configured to amplify a different respective subwindow of the first set of subwindows traveling in the first direction; and

a second plurality of optical line amplifiers, each of the second plurality of optical line amplifiers configured to amplify a different respective subwindow of the second set of subwindows traveling in the second direction,

wherein the first and second plurality of optical line amplifiers are configured to substantially equalize gain across the set of channels within the operating window.

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**REMARKS**

In the Office Action, dated February 3, 2003, the Examiner rejected claims 77-82 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for allegedly failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. The Examiner further rejected claims 77-82 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,909,295 (hereinafter "LI") in view of U.S. Patent